

Meeting With Staff and Families at Embassy Warsaw

Remarks

John Kerry

Secretary of State

U.S. Embassy Warsaw

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AMBASSADOR MULL: All right, good morning, people and (in Polish). One of the most momentous things that can happen in any embassy is for the Secretary of State to come visit. But today, we have something even more momentous, and that's the opportunity to welcome a fellow Red Sox fan to Warsaw. (Laughter.) So I present to you, Mr. Secretary, team Warsaw. Welcome to Poland.

SECRETARY KERRY: Thanks very much. Wow. Thank you. Dzień dobry.

AUDIENCE: Dzień dobry.

SECRETARY KERRY: Good morning. Nice to see everybody. Thank you for being out here and freezing. How long have you been out here? (Laughter.) How long have you been out here?

PARTICIPANT: Over an hour.

SECRETARY KERRY: Long enough for your teeth to be chattering. (Laughter.) Well, I'll get you indoors really fast. I apologize for – everybody. But it's good New England weather. Any New Englanders here?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

SECRETARY KERRY: What? One, two? That's it? All right. Well, thank you very much. Well, how come – everybody else is a Red Sox fan notwithstanding, right? (Laughter.) Yeah.

Thank you. It's a great, great privilege to be here, and I'm particularly happy to be able to get to my first bilateral in Central Europe. And I'm glad it's here in Poland because obviously the relationship with Poland is very, very special. And last night I went out to the former Prime Minister's gravesite, and it was so moving in the night to be standing under all those birch trees, and you could smell the aroma from the birch and the flowers around the many graves, and they were all lit with candlelight. It was just very, very dramatic and a special introduction, if you will. So I was grateful for that good moment.

I want to thank our great Ambassador and his wife, Cheri. Thank you very, very much, both of you, for your terrific job. We – he really is one of the most experienced people in the Foreign Service. He's been everywhere all over the place, served as Executive Secretary, worked as an assistant to Bill Burns. He's

had ambassadorships and been in so many trouble spots. And this is not a trouble spot, so it's probably soft landing for him, but it's a very special spot. Thank you for your great work. I really appreciate it.

And I guess – and Doug Greene -- where's Doug? Doug's over there. And Randa, is she here somewhere hiding in front? I understand that when they're not pouring beers at the Salty Dog, they can be found on YouTube making a new hit – recording something. What do you guys – what do you play?

PARTICIPANT: Well, we just sing along to other songs.

SECRETARY KERRY: You sing along to other songs? Is it worth listening to, folks? No answer necessary. I know – I want to protect your promotions. (Laughter.)

Let me just say that what you do here, I think you all know this, is – apart from freezing – is really, really important. Last night after I came back from the cemetery, I took the time because I wanted to go just sort of read up a little bit because I know how special Warsaw is. And the history of Poland is just absolutely remarkable. This city, which was razed by Hitler, and about 85 percent of it destroyed, which has been occupied and reoccupied and assaulted and re-assaulted and names from the Bolshevik era to Napoleon are associated with the battles here. And always the people of Poland have fought back in the most incredible way.

We think of Warsaw and you think of Warsaw Convention, Warsaw Pact, Warsaw ghetto, Warsaw uprising in all of these amazing moments of history that are affiliated with this city. And the brilliance of its rebirth is a great story for everybody in the world. And I get to walk through downtown today and walk up to the old wall of the old city, and I wish I had had more time. But to look at the rebuilding and the way in which the care has gone into trying to restore what was there. How many cities in the world, how many towns, villages, have that sense of history, that connection and the willpower to try to make that kind of replication take place for all of its cost and all of its difficulty. It's really a great story. And I think a story that is particularly reflective of the people in this country.

As many of you know, we in Massachusetts have a particular link to a fellow named Casimir Pulaski who came to Marblehead, Massachusetts and wrote a letter to George Washington in which he offered himself up saying I've come here for freedom and I'm willing to fight and die for freedom here and became this Revolutionary War hero to us and a great figure in all of history. That is the connection between the United States and Poland.

And now we have special modern day linkages – the commitment to the missile defense and to NATO. We're about to celebrate the 25th anniversary of freedom, the 15th anniversary of NATO, the 10th anniversary of the membership in the EU. All of these things are signals of a great evolution for Poland that now makes it one of the powerhouses economically and security-wise within the European community.

So that's what you're all a part of. And every day that you engage in this relationship – I think we're about, what, 120-strong as Americans here, or something like that? And 350 or so foreign nationals? And whether you're Foreign Service or Civil Service or a local employee or whatever – foreign national

working here – every one of you are ambassadors for the United States of America. And every one of you, every day in your interactions, are America. You may be, in many cases, the only American someone will meet or get to know or be the first face they get to see when they come to the Consulate, to the -- particularly consular affairs, visa, or whatever it is to be able to travel the country and reunite with family members and so forth.

So President Obama and I really want to thank you for helping to sustain and grow a vital relationship. Hopefully in the next days the leadership of Poland and the region can help to bring Ukraine into the Eastern Partnership. That will be a very important thing, along with Moldova and Georgia. And a very significant growth of European possibilities. And also the TTIP – the TTIP as we call it. That has the ability to transform both of our economies and create one of the largest marketplaces in the world, which will raise the standards of doing business and assist us to be able to have a race to the top, not a race to the bottom, as can happen in so many places.

So I'm going to end your torture in the cold, stop your freezing, and just sort of wrap up here and have a chance to say hello to you and do a few photos. But you're doing something unique. It's not a lot of jobs – believe me, I ran for president, I went all around America. I met people all over the country, many of whom I found didn't love the jobs they were in, but go to work every day so they can do the things they want to do raising their families. This is a job you get to love every day, because you're making a difference for your country. You're making a difference for other people. It's tangible. It's rewarding. And as a result, our country is projecting our values and our interests in ways that you can take pride in.

So a profound thank you to each and every one of you. I'm proud to serve as Secretary of State, and I promise you, as long as you have my back, I'll have yours. Thank you all very, very much. Take care.

(Applause.)